GLANCES AT INNER ENGLAND

EDWARD JENKINS

Glances at Inner England

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A LECTURE

DELIVERED IN

THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

BY

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THE Essay which constitutes this volume has, under the title of 'The England of To-day,' been read by the author in various parts of the United States and Canada to audiences ranging in number of attendants from five hundred to twenty-five hundred persons. The author's reasons for so frankly reviewing among foreigners the less favourable conditions of English society, are fairly stated in the lecture. He selected such topics as he thought would reflect some lessons upon questions of vital interest to Americans or colonists.

The author deems it unnecessary, in an age which is conspicuous for the study of

comparative politics, to offer any explanation to his countrymen of the candour with which he has treated among foreigners of the national weaknesses and evils which he has never hesitated to expose at home. Some petty growls in one or two small provincial communities, from people who, for want of any definite idea in politics, consider a vague ultra-loyalty to be equivalent to a whole scheme of economy and general political Apostle's creed, were too insignificant to deserve notice at the hands of anyone who mixed in imperial politics, and were too much involved with narrow and mean local prejudices to be taken as an indication of the opinion of any intelligent British society.

But though he had nothing to apologise for, it is just that the author's statements should be reviewed by the British public, and if false, be corrected—if improperly applied, be confuted. Hence the lecture is published precisely as it was given in one or other of the great cities of America. The whole, as

here presented, was obviously too long for any single evening, and therefore different passages were selected to be delivered in each city; but they were read as here produced, and the lecture in the aggregate is correctly reported.

The author has another object in presenting this lecture just now to the English public. It was prepared by an Englishman familiar with American life and institutions, to be read to Americans, and he was perforce obliged to look at the condition of England rather from the point of view of an outsider than of an Englishman. Hence he believes that, at this particular juncture, the lecture will be valuable as a fresh, simple, and comprehensive review of the difficulties in the way of the Reform party in England. He offers it also as a general statement of the programme of that party in the coming elections. The Tory vainly seeking in the coruscations of Mr. Disraeli's wit, or the steady and sober play of common-sense

in Lord Derby, or in the strident screams of the Marquis of Salisbury, for any evidences of a policy, may at least find here traced out the lines of coming defeats.

The author inscribes to the RADICAL PARTY and to the WORKMEN OF GREAT BRITAIN this little handbook for the elections of 1874.

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Glances at Inner England.

I.

OUTER ENGLAND.

Outer

Of the crowds of Americans who land at Liverpool, and overrun the little island they threaten some day to annex, few can claim to have seen what I am going to disclose to you of the England of to-day.

They of course remark a good deal that is curious, a good deal that is odd, a good deal that is splendid, a good deal that is squalid; they will form no mean ideas of the strength, the wealth, the glory of Britain.

Glancing from car or carriage window over a landscape which seems to eyes accustomed to the grand proportions of New World scenery to be exquisitely dwarfed,

bright with strangely-vivid green, ranged in mosaics of variously coloured earth and crops parcelled out in charming diversities of shape into what appear to be little garden fields—its trees and plantations studded over hill and dale with a natural skill or by a most artistic chance, the traveller regards the picturesque and romantic aspects of England. Here a ruin, that mayhap of Rievaulx Abbey, lying in some verdant vale, embosomed in richly-wooded hills, with its unroofed aisles and nave and choir, its crumbling towers, the long ranges of its clustered columns and bended arches, the straggling remnants of its once elaborate cloisters, while over all, here and there, the solemn, slow-sprent ivy crowns with eternalising chaplets the worn-out glory of monasticism : there a castle, like that of Ludlow, the ancient stronghold of the Lords of the Marches, towering over delicious vales—typical together of manly strength and feminine beauty—recalling a tyranny and a chivalry together and for ever gone : the mind, as one stands there reviewing the long historic, literary, and political memories of those grey stones, fall-

ing into a sweet confusion of romantic visions, and revelling amid the combined influences of nature and of fancy. Or, there again, some noble Hall—like Castle Howard, or Chatsworth, or Trentham—homes for princes, the product of an intermediate era of classical taste, with broad grand wings and rich façade, its porches and colonnades flashing to view amid scenes of sylvan loveliness so fair, so Eden-like, as to transport the soul with an unwicked envy of those who can command and enjoy such beauties this side heaven, and with wonder at the wealth of a nation so many of whose nobles can dwell in royal palaces. Or here, once more, is a village, the first foundations of whose humble homes were laid a thousand years ago, dozing in some bowery hollow, with weather-tinted cottages, all thatched and gabled and dormered in quaint angles and slopes, its dilapidated windmill, its yew-decked churchyard, and the Gothic tower or spire that peeps above the ancient trees. In these and a thousand other such scenes may you look upon merry England and yet

not see what I would have you see of the England of to-day.

Or here, *presto*, with a sudden whirl—the scene changes—

> Tower'd cities please us then,
> And the busy hum of men.

Here are great towns, composite of old and new, with their huge factory barracks of brick and stone, their tall chimneys vomiting the smoke which overshadows the life beneath, with dingy, crowded homes, where every dweller and every room suggests a new problem of society: with roaring furnaces at which smudgy men perform feats Enceladan with iron and flame, and humanity wrapped in primitive dirt asserts its mastery over matter. And here again, vast docks and rivers, ringing with the clang of iron and steel, or forested for miles with masts, and huge warehouses storing up the riches of a hundred lands. Here indeed is there an England vast, strange, unequalled, displaying in old age an energy of development that rivals that of the New World; but not here would I have you study with me the England

of to-day. Or the traveller may review the religious and philanthropic institutions of England. He finds the tokens of a religious zeal and of a benevolent activity organised, unceasing, universal. In confusing successions of vast assemblies at Exeter Hall or elsewhere he may do more than mark the absurdities of religion and the follies of religious bigotry; he may learn much not only of earnest work, but of the circumstances which call these institutions into action. Moreover, he may con the newspapers, listen to parliamentary debates, frequent the clubs, mingle in the brilliant society of Belgravia or Mayfair, pass weeks in enjoying the aristocratic pleasures of country mansions, and thus see English ecclesiasticism, politics, and society in their most striking aspects.

Yet, with all this, you may and in most instances *do*, return without an inkling, at best with only hints, of that wonderful *cosmos*, with its underlying principles of life and action, its secret springs of policy, its social conditions and relations, its problems

of government and society, its prospects, contingencies, and perils, which indeed constitute my topic this evening.

Not that all is hidden. The traveller least curious gets glimpses of deeper things. He often observes, for instance, in the midst of rural districts, groups of handsome buildings; or, walking in London some winter evening, passes a great institution, at the door of which lingers a line of shivering men and women, ay! and God help us! children. And he is told that these are the palaces of the poor; the poor-houses of a wealthy and too wide-spread national bounty. His mind takes in some ideas of one of the gravest questions ever given to a people to solve, and he shakes his head ruefully at this sudden revelation of a society where one in twenty of the population receives gratuitous relief at the expense of the remainder. But as we shall see directly, little can be apprehended of all that is mixed up with that serious question, or conceive how its roots run out and into almost every other social and political condition.

II.

DEFINITION OF SUBJECT.

You will already then have divined that in speaking of *the England of to-day* I refer to it, not in its picturesque or its romantic aspects, not in its commercial or statistical phases, not in relation to its power, its wealth, its amazing energy and progress—these are obvious to every one of my audience,—but of things which in any nation lend to all those aspects their *real importance*, things of its inner life and polity and social condition.

Definition of subject.

III.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM.

I have not come here simply to amuse you. I could not have come to you without a certain mission. What I am most anxious to do is, as far as may be in a brief evening, to give to Americans a better notion of the hidden meaning of some of those phases of

Importance of international criticism.

English politics and society of which they read the superficial history in telegrams, and newspaper items, or magazine articles.

How important is it, nay, let me say how *imperative*, that in these inner matters of national life, England should be known to Americans, America be understood of Englishmen! The world is becoming daily more international. The problems of humanity reassert themselves in all states, in every relation, and the secret motives of a nation's life are among the most precious of the curiosities which it can expose to the gaze of a curious world.

But I say, by all means let these things be honestly and profoundly elicited. For such matters your brilliant criticasters are but the crackling of thorns under a pot. Take your English novelist, satirist, publicist, who scurries from New York to New Orleans. He takes up his graphic pen and sketches the surface of a great republic. See him examine people and scenery with the same eye-glass and with the same brains. He jots down its most obvious characteristics and

chronicles its petty details of life with an air of profound insight; pokes a finger into its deepest social abysses, and measures its political strata by his umbrella. Can he describe for you the America of to-day? Like a child at a panorama he may have looked upon the illuminated screen where the hidden painting and light and lens have thrown their shadows and reflections, but of the causes of the scene he looks upon or of the philosophy of its action, he at best only guesses. How much you Americans have suffered in this way at the hands of my roving countrymen I blush to confess, but it is some relief to know that it has not always been without compensating injuries.

IV.

GROUNDS OF INTERNATIONAL AMITY.

Grounds of international amity.

In compliment to your common sense I avoid the hackneyed sentiments about the eternal ties which bind England and America. England and America are two human nations,

and would go to war with as much zest, and perhaps ferocity, as any two nations in the world. That sort of sentiment has been overdone; and when one of my countrymen vapours to you about our common race, common language, common Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, W. Field, and Holloway's pills, you may be sure he either has nothing to say, or is over here collecting for some church or charity. Ladies and gentlemen, our international brotherhood is to be evinced by better things than these: by a candid study of each other's social errors or improvements: by a candid interchange of thought: by a candid, sincere, bold, and reciprocal criticism of each other's societies, literature, politics, religion: by the suppression of jealousies and heartburnings: by a more intimate knowledge on either part of all those countless varieties of circumstance which tend to prove, not that our language but our interests are one. It is in this spirit that I have come among you, not to expose or condemn my own country, but frankly to speak of such things in my own country as may be of consequence to you, or may enable you

the better to understand its difficulties as well as its greatness.

V.

VESTED INTERESTS.

Vested interests.

Where is one to begin upon a subject of so vast a range? Here you have many problems—there there are hundreds. Politics here have their knotty points, there they are tangled in innumerable skeins. The diversities of sects, the antipathies of religions, the incongruities of class interests, are here grave and embarrassing—there they are numberless, extreme, irritable, irreconcilable. Sociology is here beginning to be a well of profound depth—there it is a bottomless whirlpool. The evils and wrongs of society are here enough to make men anxious—there they force themselves upon every intelligence, and what is to some people more important, carry their interest home to every breeches pocket—*where there is one.* Institutions here are many, and their relations vast—there they have multiplied through centuries, consist of the accretions of ages, and are built

into the very framework of society. Interests like these you touch at your peril. They have arms and suckers as numerous and powerful as a devil-fish. They cling to the rock of their rights like limpets. When you tear them away you must break off large sections of their base with them.

Here, then, is suggested our first topic. A prominent thing which stands out in the condition of the *England of to-day* is the number and power of VESTED INTERESTS. The Crown has vested interests—the aristocracy have vested interests—the Church has vested interests—the clergy—the liquor-sellers—the army and navy—the bench and the bar—officials of the court, of law—every endowed charity—the schools, and many schoolmasters, railways, turnpikes, municipal corporations, lords of manors, dukes and chancellors of duchies, markets, fairs, constitute a vast and mighty array of vested interests. You can scarcely drive the chariot of legislation in any direction without jarring against one of these obstructive interests.

VI.

INFLUENCE OF VESTED INTERESTS.

Influence of vested interests.

Hence Reform in England, and among yourselves, however similar it may be in principles, is in development a different thing. In new communities anomalies in laws, in customs, in polity, vanish before reformers like clouds before the wind. In old societies they can only be removed under the threat of danger, as you blow up houses to stay a great conflagration, or by the slow incessant wearing of advancing and receding tides of public opinion.

Aye! great is the potency of vested interest! It is a solid body concreted into the wall of society, and you can only remove it by breaking down that on which it is stayed. It cannot be abated without noise, and labour, and money; a solvent people are least and last willing to apply to it. Its impudence is astounding, its claims exorbitant, its obstinacy selfish and intractable.

In proportion to the number of vested

interests existing in a country, with all their permanent establishments, connections, rights, privileges, and immunities, is that country fettered and locked up from freedom of action, is the majority of its people restrained by the privileges of a minority, is the liberty of that country, its advancement, the healthiness and purity of its political life, imperilled.

A vested interest is a millstone hanged about the neck of society. Like Sinbad's old man, it clings round the shoulders of a nation with an ever-tightening grasp. It does not much matter whether its legs are clerical, or aristocratic, or plebeian—whether they wear the livery of the monarch, or the boots of the dragoon, or the silk-stockings of a bishop, or the fleshes of an alderman, or the naturals of a *sans-culotte*—their grip is none the less strong and deadly—it impedes both breath and motion.

Such interests must to some extent exist wherever there are human societies, but the aim of wise statesmen and a wise people will be to keep or reduce them to the smallest number and lowest power. Laws which en-

courage their creation are impolitic, laws which exaggerate their power are criminal.

VII.

A GREAT VESTED INTEREST—THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

A great vested interest—the Church of England.

Most prominent at this moment of all these great interests in England is the Established Church; endowed with 90,000,000*l.* of property; its bishops sitting in the House of Peers; its clergy of every grade scattered over the country, prescribing in rural districts, with few exceptions, the religion of the people, preponderating also in the towns; its ministers—and only its ministers—*ex officio* registrars of marriages, and managers of endowed schools; its burial-grounds (those of the parish and therefore of the parish people) closed to all services but those of its rubric; its schools the principal *media* of education in England. This is a church not only wealthy and politically powerful, but socially preëminent, not to belong to which is a disability.

VIII.

ITS ALLIES.

Its allies.

This mighty institution, holding in its hands the keys of heaven and hell, wields in England to-day a power rivalled only by that of its strange ally, the Licensed Victuallers' Association. For in this crisis of their fates the clergy and the publicans no longer stand afar off from each other. They have joined hands; and four elections out of five are won by the unholy combination. It is characteristic of such an institution to have no conscience about its allies. It was more than two centuries ago the aider and abettor of a tyrannical monarchy. From it were cruelly driven the noblest elements it contained, and some of its cast-off members laid the foundations of one of the greatest nations in the world. Through its whole history it has been on the side of privilege against equality—of patronage against liberty—of power against right—of caste and priesthood against liberation.

IX.

ITS POWER AND CHARACTERISTICS.

Its power and characteristics.

Its patent incongruity with the ideas of this age and its inherent defects had shaken its foundations. But as a last effort, and true to its instincts, it has by taking advantage of a combination of circumstances, succeeded in procuring legislation in England which virtually throws into its hands the education of a majority of English children, with additional endowments.

The pretensions and privileges of this vast organisation complicate almost every social problem—obstruct almost every social reform. Its influence is divisive of Christianity, through the arrogance of its claims and the assumption of its clerics. So long as its supremacy lasts religious equality is impossible and religious bigotry is a national characteristic. It is a conglomerate of irreconcilables. Within are fightings, without are fears. The representatives of free thought, of Calvinism, of Ritualism, alike find nests

under the eaves of its churches and cathedrals.

The neologian, the disciple of the religion of culture if it has any disciple, the Evangelical, the Ritualist, may alike feed within its fold. Its livings are bought and sold by Simoniacal contracts. The Ritualists have lately been rejoicing because they succeeded in purchasing the oversight of a piece of Christ's fold in Liverpool, of rather larger size and with sheep of somewhat better breed than usual. Who ever expected to see Christ's kingdom cut up into lots and disposed of to the highest-bidding adventurers of religious joint-stock companies with limited liability?

But this is not all. In many places the rector or vicar is also a magistrate, and (as clerics love power) an active magistrate; so that he who preaches in Christ's name on the Sabbath, and is to soothe the pillow of dying parishioners, administers on week days the criminal law, sends poachers to be tried at the assizes, and convicts agricultural unionists, be they men or women, under Acts passed in

the interest of employers of labour. Hence the poor labourers who hear at church that all men are equal before God, must, at the bench of magistrates, learn from the same lips that the laws of England have introduced important amendments to the Sermon on the Mount in favour of land and money.

But you will say, 'Such a body as that must be on the eve of dissolution!' No. One bond unites the incongruous elements; vested interest—more irreverently designated loaves and fishes.

How great is the religious discord promoted by this gigantic anomaly, who can describe? It must be seen and endured to be understood in all its bearings. An Established Church minister will not enter a nonconformist pulpit—a nonconformist minister must not enter a church desk. In the country parishes the church clergyman and his flock look with disdain on the dissenting minister and his congregation. It needs indeed some strength of mind to be a dissenter in the rural districts, because it implies ostracism from the best society. The rich

man's child, the poor man's child, will alike suffer from a Christianity which is vindictive or a charity which is sectarian.

Why do I mention these things?—to amuse *you*, or to derogate from your admiration of episcopacy, or to discount my native land? I should scorn to minister anything to sectarian rancour, or to vilify my own country to strangers. I am speaking to you of a *political institution*, of a Church in the meshes of the State. I refer to these things only that you may have an idea of the influence exerted in English politics and society by a gigantic vested interest which from end to end of England prompts and fosters unchristian enmity, bigotry, and strife.

X.

WHITTIER'S POEM.

Whittier's poem.

Your poet Whittier has prophesied in noble numbers against the hierarchs of such an institution.

Now too oft the priesthood wait
At the threshold of the state ;
Waiting for the beck and nod
Of its power as law and God.

Not on them the poor rely,
Not to them looks liberty,
Who, with fawning falsehood, cower
To the wrong when clothed with power.

Oh ! to see them meanly cling
Round the master. round the king,
Sported with, and sold and bought,
Pitifuller sight is not !

Tell me not that this must be,
God's true priest is always free !
Free the needed truth to speak,
Right the wronged and raise the weak.

Not to fawn on wealth and state,
Leaving Lazarus at the gate.
Not to peddle creeds like wares,
Not to mutter hireling prayers.

Not to print the new life's bliss
On the sable ground of this,
Golden streets for idle knave,
Sabbath rest for weary slave !

Not for words and works like these,
Priest of God, thy mission is,
But to make earth's desert glad,
In its Eden greenness clad.

And to level manhood bring
Lord and peasant, serf and king;
And the Christ of God to find
In the humblest of thy kind.

XI.

STATE AND FREE RELIGIONS CONTRASTED.

State and Free religions contrasted.

Yet in the face of these things there are men, and able men, who argue in favour of a state religion. The Bismarckian principle has been ably propounded in England, and the right of the state to control the faiths taught in it has been supported by arguments that would have justified the Inquisition. Even among yourselves have arisen people to assert that the legislature ought to enact the existence of a God. I have often thought that the God whose name is not mentioned in the American constitution is more revered by the American people than is in England the God who shares with her Majesty the Queen the headship of the Church. I may be wrong, but my own observation is that religion is here more earnest, more vivid,

more energetic and sacrificing and less sectarian, than in any other Anglo-Saxon community, and I attribute it to the perfect level of religious *status* and to the absence of what is termed the *patronage* of government.

XII.

PRIVILEGE IN ENGLAND.

Privilege in England.

Such then is the nature of vested interests. I have said enough to warn you to be jealous of their establishment and growth among you. They are silent and secret in their increase.

Crescit occulto, velut arbor ævo.

Strong I say, in an old country, is vested interest; great also is the power of PRIVILEGE. Privilege in Germany controls governments, rules society, commands the army, suppresses the people; and in that very Germany now so preëminent, privilege, waxing unendurable, will yet be dethroned by a liberal revolution.

'But,' you say, 'what of privilege in

England? Have not Reform Bills done much to diminish its power?' Something; but still not enough. The present House of Commons, elected five years ago, is nearly as much the representative of land, capital, and aristocracy as the last. Privilege tells at every point—often I believe unconsciously. For in one thing is England supereminent—in one thing to be envied by all other nations; I mean in the general ability and purity of her statesmen. No one ever dreams of imputing to an English statesman of eminence any corruption, anything worse than party or class prejudice. Therein you look for their weaknesses; and I have never heard it gravely suggested in my time that there was a member of the House of Commons to be bought with money. How vast and blessed an influence on English society is exerted by the high personal character of her great statesmen, you cannot overestimate. Yet, as I said, privilege is mighty. No ministry can be formed without a preponderating representation of the aristocratic party. Sons of peers or Whig land-owners have, in a Liberal government, the

best chances of under-secretaryships. In the army or navy, admirably as they have been reformed, privilege still wins appointments and promotions. Privilege resists reforms, gets special benefits, influences Parliament, sits on magisterial benches in the country, maintains unjust laws, discourages the unprivileged classes.

XIII.

INSTANCE OF POWER OF PRIVILEGE—THE BIRMINGHAM SEWAGE BILL.

Instance of power of Privilege—The Birmingham Sewage Bill.

Let me give you an instance. Birmingham some time ago was suffering in a ghastly way from bad drainage. The town council succeeded in carrying through the Committees of the Lords and Commons a sewage bill, at a cost of 20,000*l.* This bill proposed to discharge the sewage of the town on land lying near the property of Sir Charles Adderley and Sir Robert Peel. But these gentlemen, though one of them professed to be a sanitary reformer, would have no sewage

between the wind and their nobility, and though it had been proved to the satisfaction of the two Committees that the proposed scheme would create no nuisance near their property, they collected enough friends and landowners to throw the bill out of the House of Commons on the third reading. The people of Birmingham lost their 20,000*l.*, and its enormous population went on generating disease. The case was aggravated by this fact: the minority in the division in the House of Commons on the Birmingham Sewage Bill represented more voters than the majority.

We still retain those relics of a barbarous era of statesmanship, unequal constituencies, and ten of the smallest towns in Great Britain may outvote ten of the largest. This is one of the incidents of privilege, as it also gives it additional power.

XIV.

ANOTHER INSTANCE OF COMBINED INFLUENCE OF VESTED INTERESTS AND PRIVILEGE—THE EDUCATION ACT, 1870.

Another instance of combined influence of vested interests and privilege: the Education Act of 1870.

Again, the National education originated by Lord John Russell and his coadjutors slowly pushed its way for thirty years through all the difficulties created by the indifference of the people, by sectarian animosity, by the assumption of the Established Church, by the arrogance of Roman Catholic pretensions, as to the education of citizens who belong first to the state and then to their churches—pretensions, let me add, which, as we in England have learned to our cost, *no people can listen to without peril, or concede without derogating from its liberties.* Government endeavoured for years to secure a national education by voluntary effort aided by the state. Thus there grew up a great group of vested interests—the denominational schools, most of them belonging to the Church or to the Romanists. They failed, however, to

penetrate the dense mass of ignorance; and under the pressure of terrible facts we resolved to take a step forward. The Education Act of 1870 recognised the duty of the state to see that no child should grow up without the opportunity of a good education. It postponed the recognition of the complementary principle that every child should be compelled to take advantage of that opportunity. The Act also enacted that no part of England and Wales should be deficient in school accommodation; it did not, by making the education everywhere rate-supported and free, make it a right purchased by the whole community, common to every child in the community, and therefore to be enjoyed without stint or reproach. One step more was required to make the system perfect.

The education given by the state should be given under state inspection—it should be secular only—its expenses should be subject to the control of a body elected by the ratepayers. The moment you omit any modification of these principles, you let loose in the community the dogs of religious war,

and have given away the guarantees of an efficient and economical education. In England the blunder was committed. The Churches of England and Rome, the aristocratic and landed interests, proved too strong for those who were in favour of religious equality. Denominational schools, belonging chiefly to those two bodies, were perpetuated under a state system. Six months was given, with the bribe of additional aid from the state, to increase the number of denominational schools in the parishes, until the accommodation should be sufficient for all the children in the parish, and thus secure exclusive ascendancy to one sect. School boards elected by ratepayers, and empowered to levy local rates for education, were only to be formed where there were not enough denominational schools to accommodate all the children. The denominational schools were to receive for the children they taught a certain grant from the imperial government; and school boards, where there were any, were empowered to pay, at denominational schools which the parents might

designate, the fees of the children of paupers who had religious prejudices—that is to say, I may be forced to pay a rate which goes to support a school in which are taught doctrines I abhor.

In consequence of these wicked and pernicious blunders, while hundreds of thousands of children are waiting to be educated, England is a battle-field of religious bigotry. In elections for school boards, the question is not how many men of experience in educational matters shall be elected, but how many representatives of each sort shall sit upon the board and give it a secular or a denominational leaning.

Those natural allies of Liberalism, the Nonconformists, seeing in this policy an unfair advantage conferred on the Establishment and on Romanism, are either hostile or cold to a government which has been false to its principles. In that old country, with its overpowering State Church, compromises, which here are possible, are impracticable; the power of the *un*compromising is great indeed; religious bigotry, exasperated

by ever-obtrusive social and political inequalities, will neither be generous nor tolerant, and the only smooth platform of state action is absolute equality.

XV.

A THIRD INSTANCE: TRADES-UNION LEGISLATION, THE CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT.

A third instance: Trades-Union legislation; the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

Let me cite a third instance. These concrete exhibits of the truth I am stating are far more instructive than any arguments.

Some time ago the trades-unions applied to Parliament for relief from the abominable laws which rendered their associations illegal, and which deprived them of any remedy in a court of law for the defalcations of their officers. Parliament passed a milk-and-water permissive measure, because just then the working-men were important to the Liberal party: but at the same time privilege stepped in and demanded its securities. The Act was supplemented by an Act called the 'Criminal Law Amendment Act,' and which

defined special misdemeanours supposed to be peculiar to trades-unionists, with special penalties for the commission of them. This was a case of class-legislation. The ordinary criminal law, which protects all the rest of the community, so far as it is possible to protect it, from infringements of personal liberty of thought or action, but which cannot possibly protect every individual from the thousand moral influences which his fellows may bring to bear on him, provides penalties for threatening or molesting people; and, moreover, it is as unfair as it is impolitic to define crimes as class crimes and to punish them as class offences. True, the Criminal Law Amendment Act was separated from the Trades-Union Act, and thus in name appears as a simple amendment of the general criminal law, but both its origin and its terms stand forth to brand it as a gross instance of special legislation, aimed at and affecting in almost all its particulars only one portion of the community. Ever since that time the Act has been working with increasing hardships. It is purposely indefi-

nite—no one can tell whether some word or act may not bring him within the clutches of some prejudiced Tory magistrate or judge. You will remember that two clerical justices in Oxfordshire sent nineteen women to prison under this Act, some of them with infants at their breasts, for frightening a couple of men.

XVI.

A FOURTH INSTANCE: THE WORKING-MEN AND PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION.

A fourth instance: the working men and Parliamentary Representation.

Once more: since the Reform Act, the working-men have been attempting to secure for themselves that influence in legislation, and that opportunity of expressing their opinions in Parliament, which the measure was designed to afford them.

The principle of class representation is not a sound one—it is obviously prone to exaggerate class-prejudices and to create representatives less useful to the community than diligent in promoting class interests at

the expense of the common good. But in England no honest observer can conceal from himself that there is class legislation promoted for the classes in power, and sometimes adversely to the working-men. In that situation the only method of adjusting the balance and preparing the way for equal, proper and unprejudiced representation is to place in the House men who can speak, and speak authoritatively, the wishes of the working-class. But here privilege stands out once more. The present Liberal party, with Mr. Gladstone at its head, was practically placed in power by the votes of working-men, but even a Liberal government shrinks from meeting in the House of Commons the representatives of labour.

In most of the constituencies the privileged classes, however liberal in their professions, would scarcely look at, still less assist a labour candidate; and in those where the preponderance of voters has been on the side of the working-men, the Liberal whip has jockeyed their candidates out of the seat with admirable and invariable cleverness. In fact

I suppose the ministry dared not express any sympathy for the claims of their most numerous supporters. The reaction among the upper classes in England after the Hyde Park riot was very strong; the effect on the English middle classes of the horrible days of the Paris Commune was naturally extreme; the working-men are cleverly and persistently associated by the Whig and Tory press with the acts or expressions of a handful of Internationalists in London and of a few Republican agitators. On every question affecting the working-men, the present Government and House of Commons have leaned to the side of privilege and capital.

XVII.

EFFECT OF THE POLICY OF REPRESSION.

Effect of the policy of repression.

You will always find that where men seek to repress powers that ought to be recognised, they exasperate those powers to dangerous development.

This has been the effect of the arrogance

of privilege in England. You get glimpses of the revolt in the almost universal opposition of the working-men to royal dowries—in their doubtful attitude towards the Queen—in their angry criticism of every act like the reduction of the number of artisans employed in the naval dockyards, while the sinecures, and offices nearly equivalent to sinecures, are left untouched—in their widespread suspicion of Mr. Gladstone's ministry and in the significant though not alarming progress of republicanism.

XVIII.

REPUBLICANISM IN ENGLAND.

Republicanism in England.

The republican movement in England and Scotland is important, but not at present formidable. Yet I think it may be made so by the obstinate folly of Tory and Whig obstructives, and at any crisis of the national affairs. Mr. Bradlaugh, its principal leader, is an able man and has a large following. In one or two towns, I am informed, the

Republicans are strong enough to control the elections. There are about 100 Republican clubs,[1] but they are not, as I understand, combined in one league. As a rule they associate their aims with the principles of the 'International' and the atheism of Mr. Bradlaugh. These clubs appear to me to be here and there ingeniously mixed up with the socialist schemes of single-eyed agitators, and naturally take their stand alongside the workman in the paramount cause of labour against capital. I know a good deal of the working-classes in the great towns, and I cannot conceal from myself or you, that they are in a temper to accept what I deem the fatal seeds of propagandism which threatens alike religion and government. To anyone who attentively considers the position of England with a desire for her welfare, this movement can have only the aspect of mischief and folly. Republicanism here is yet on its trial: Republicanism in many of its

[1] Mr. Bradlaugh, in his speeches in the United States, claimed more, and he probably knows best, but I had the above number from an authority scarcely second to Mr. Bradlaugh.

best features already exists in England. The Queen is less powerful than your President; our ministry is more amenable to public opinion than yours. In face of the vast evils that yet remain to be redressed, and with ample machinery provided for their safe, steady, and certain removal, it seems almost criminal to divert men from practical to theoretical agitation, to upset their views of a form of government which, with all its faults, is the best in the world; especially at a time when there are better things for the noblest reformers to do.

But this movement proves how the perversity and blindness of wealth and privilege may push to extremities and combine into formidable resistance, forces which a higher wisdom would charm into utility.

XIX.

SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

System of Local Government.

Next to our vested interests and all-pervading privilege, the most noteworthy thing to a

foreigner in England would be our system of local government. Cromwell called the laws of England 'an ungodly jungle;' this system is not to be so easily epitomised. A coat of many colours, of patchwork, of darning, botching and mending—good heavens, 'tis the very motley of Bumbledom!

There are vestries and boards of guardians in some places; mayors and corporations in others; in others local government boards; in others boards of health; county magistrates do some things—parish beadles do others, and the spirit of the parish beadle is the spirit of local government.

XX.

THE PARISH BEADLE.

The parish beadle.

Great is the parish beadle. His dignity is a paltry one—it is the mere dignity of a livery—yet he loveth to display it with the air of one in a prince's clothing. He (administering only a parish) nevertheless deemeth himself capable of any office. To him

the beadle's gown is the chief qualification, the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of government.

'I should become an earldom rarely,' said Sancho, 'for I was once beadle to a brotherhood, and the beadle's gown did so become me that everyone said I had the presence of a warden. Then how do you think I shall look with a duke's robes on my back, all bedaubed with gold or pearl like any foreign count? I believe we shall have folks come a hundred leagues to see me!'

So the beadle worshippeth office—wrappeth himself round with office and its badges—accounteth that his office was made for him and he for his office. To him his parish is the world. The beadle loveth to show his power; before him little boys tremble, and old women bow down themselves. The weak look in vain to him for help or mercy; to the strong he showeth respect. He fawneth upon the great, and by humility he winneth many favours—and many kicks. He is willing to sacrifice anything for his office and himself; even his

wife, his family, his wife's relations, his honour, his honesty—all these things are to him as nought weighed in the balances against the ennobling garb of office. Office makes *him*. Without office he is John Smith or Ezekiel Jones, of anywhere—in office he is the Beadle of Bellyfillin. He will take any oath of allegiance you please, an it will procure him an office; he will break any oath you like, if it will preserve him the dignity and the emoluments. Moreover he confineth himself not to one place. He goeth about, seeking where and what he may devour. He getteth into Parliaments, or Senates, or State-legislatures, he riseth to be cabinet minister, he may even become Prime Minister or First President, or Governor, but everywhere and always he carrieth with him the spirit of the beadle. Like Sancho, you may swear of him that his gown may improve with every change, but yet the two-legged beast within, and the spirit within the two-legged beast, will be still and always that of the parish beadle.

privileges, are together too powerful for any government to attack except in detail or by a sidewind. Not long since, you will remember, Mr. Gladstone threw out a much-needed warning to the Corporation of London. The whole bevy of Bumbledom went into hysterics. The Tory party sounded the trumpet. An ancient and honourable corporation was in danger. On the sacred persons of Gog and Magog impious hands might be laid. The Lord Mayor of London asked all the mayors in England to dinner. The chaplain said grace. Over turtle-soup and venison, *chasséed* with champagne, they soothed their outraged spirits, they encouraged each other to believe that institutions so antique, so essential to the existence of the commonwealth, should never die: they pledged themselves to a new solemn League and Covenant in their defence. The oath was, or is, to be confirmed by a second dinner to be given by all the other mayors to the Lord Mayor of London. Even Mr. Gladstone, facing such a phalanx of embodied beef and dignity, equally intent on vindicating their corporate rights and cor-

poral privileges, flinched before them at the Mansion House, and generalised upon the dignity of local independence.

XXIII.

TENDENCY OF KNAVES AND FOOLS TO MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

Tendency of knaves and fools to municipal government.

I do not profess to know what your experience is in America, but in England we find that stupidity and knavery have a perilous tendency to aggregate and crystallise about municipal institutions. It would seem as if an ingenuous public recognised town-corporations and local boards as a substitute for respectable gaols and idiot asylums. Nay, what asylum *could* take them all in? Parochus is deaf, Parochus is blind, Parochus is stupid, Parochus is perverse: Parochus is niggardly when he ought to be generous, and free when he ought to be close: Parochus sometimes pockets the people's money, uses the people's workmen, takes commissions from the people's tradesmen, forgets the

people's health, neglects the people's business. If the cur is caught in the act of stealing a leg of mutton, he yelps when he is kicked for it, but he goes on eating the meat.

XXIV.

THE FATAL RESULTS OF NEGLIGENCE OF THE DUTIES OF CITIZENSHIP.

The fatal results of negligence of the duties of citizenship.

To a new community one cannot point a better moral than from the state of municipal administration in England. There are few evils so injurious to the body politic as administrative corruption existing through the negligence of citizens to perform their duties, whether of selection or representation. It is indeed one of the clearest evidences of rottenness in a people's condition. For it is with a nation as with a man; sacrifice is the secret of greatness. He who would win a name, a position, an estate, builds these up on self-denial. From blood and tears comes triumph: the cross wins the crown. Away then I say, from among a free people, with

the craven to whom political and municipal affairs are things of mere curiosity, or the avaricious knave who while he accepts a nation's protection declines to repay it with a citizen's devoir.

It is the inaction of the best citizens which disturbs in all free countries the play of free government. Government can only afford to be free, and a people can only deserve to be free, when citizens generally assume the common burden of working for its good. People cry out against the tyranny of majorities. High-stepping Tories cry out against it in the state, schismatics cry out against it in every free church. I dare say the man who suffers from the tyranny of majorities—that is, the man whose interests are not coincident with those of the public, finds it quite as hard to give way to a majority as it would be to yield to a pope or a kaiser. But after all (it is a mere truism to say it!) is it not a different thing to be one of a community, and have a voice either for or against what the majority desires, and to be one of a community every member of

which is bound to submit silently to the dictation of one person? Really, when we come to sift this outcry about the tyranny of majorities, we find it simply comes to this:

Abstinence of influential minorities.

The abstinence of influential minorities. In a free state, were all the citizens to be equally patriotic in their interest, labour, and sacrifice for the political purity and perfection of government, the tyranny of majorities would scarcely be a bugbear. But as a matter of course, if half the people are indifferent, the other half will take advantage of it: if the best decline the work, the worst will accept it. And I have often noticed that the men who most decry the tyranny of majorities are those who keep themselves free of the sacrifices, toils, and responsibilities of political and municipal affairs.

You know too well, as we in England have learned to our cost, the effects of this indifference. It is the common peril of democracies. Government, local or national, is apt to become the prey of state harpies. You find at length that, not the fittest man

but the most cunning demagogue or even the most egregious scoundrel, is the one who, taking the people by the ears, acquires the right to govern them. Instead of principle we get fraud; instead of patriotism, selfishness; instead of sacrifice, actual stealing; instead of statesmanship, quackery; and you remember Carlyle says that quack and dupe are the upper and under sides of the same leather.

XXV.

PATRIOTIC DUTY.

Patriotic duty.

The sentiment of patriotic duty is one of the things wherein we are nowadays most deficient. In the Greek Republics patriotic sacrifice was one of the virtues. Has Christianity diminished the obligation? Do we, and ought we not faithfully to teach our children that next to the love of God comes the spirit of devotion to the people's service? The mere sentiment of Fourth of July loyalty; the sprinkling and starring of heaven with fire-

works, tremendous roaring and rattling of cannonades and fusillades, the assertion of American citizenship in divers curious ways, in places as different as London hotels, French cafés, Rhine steamers, the Roman Corso, or the top of the Pyramids; eloquent and intensely national orations on the Declaration of Independence and the Pilgrim Fathers; that any of these, or all of them together, do but imperfectly comply with the responsibilities of patriotism we must all confess. Not seldom are they the brayings of the well-stalled jackass, who prefers speaking through his nose to being harnessed in the yoke and taking his share in dragging along the great state chariot.

XXVI.

APPEAL.

Appeal. O ye mothers and fathers, with your noble, clever, capable children growing up around you—your circle of beauty and pride,

if you would make of this free people a really great nation, supreme in its liberty, its wealth, and its might, instil into your offspring the true holy pride of a patriotism which regards no sacrifice as too extreme, no gift too rich, no energy or zeal too extravagant in the country's daily work. For here are laid the foundation of a nation's greatness, here grow the roots of its success, herein lie the seeds of its honour, its well-being, its super-eminence, its after-blessedness in the sacred consecration to its service of all its sons and daughters!

XXVII.

THE ENGLISH POOR.

The English poor.

I have spoken of vested interests, of privilege, of local administration, of the citizen's duty. Let us change the scene.

The amazing vitality and wealth of England transfixes the foreigner with astonishment. Nothing more impressed the Shah of Persia than the tokens which he saw on every

hand of boundless riches. The streets and squares of noble mansions in Belgravia, Mayfair, or Brompton, the innumerable halls and castles, with their splendid domains sprinkled over the face of the country, the magnificence of the merchants, the incessant vigour of manufactures, the crowded shipping on rivers like the Thames, the Mersey, the Humber, the Clyde, and the Tyne, astound the spectator with the idea of fabulous wealth, amidst which it would seem impossible that poverty should have a place. Yet, with all this energy and all these riches, there exists in melancholy contrast a poverty and degradation so terrible that it is a greater marvel than the splendour under which it burrows. Up from the depths comes a cry sonorous and awful, a warning to the dazzling glory above.

XXVIII.

THE CITY AND TOWN POPULATION.

The city and town population.

Let me try then,—let me try faithfully and without exaggeration, to give you an insight into some of that dense, dreadful life which underlies the crust of English society.

The Midland Railway Station at St. Pancras: the antecedents and consequences.

I stood, not many weeks ago, gazing at a magnificent pile of buildings at St. Pancras in London, erected on the plans of England's greatest architect,—one of those colossal hotels which are now attached to our chief railway *termini*, with all its adjacent station,—a triumph of engineering, its vast roof, if I am not mistaken, spanning in one arch more than an acre of ground. Where all this now stands, and on the space cleared for its approaches, I used eight years ago to visit, week after week, a population of the artisan and unskilled labouring class. Here were narrow streets and alleys, with grim, rotting tenements, every hole and corner, from cellar to attic, occupied by families—one family to a room, with sometimes a boarder besides—

the population so dense that we counted in one square 4,500 people,—on each corner a ginshop doing a thriving trade, which all our schools and entertainments, meetings, Bible classes, and sermons scarcely seemed to diminish.

Futility of preaching temperance and virtue amidst such circumstances.

Of what use is it to preach temperance and morality where the conditions are such as almost to make them not merely self-denials but martyrdoms? Well, into this neighbourhood there walk the engineer and railway contractor, backed by the strong arm of government, and forthwith they shovel out the population, square by square, thousands of them, with their goods and chattels, into the streets, to seek elsewhere something they may call *a home!* Where are they to go? They must live near their work. They cannot all seek out cottages at Barking, or Putney, or Hackney. They surge out of Somerstown and in upon the already over-crowded alleys and streets of St. Pancras—a mighty wave of hearthless and forlorn humanity. The single ones may get quartered on families and share a corner of one small room and an

eighth or ninth of the family bed—that is to say, the floor. The families get into cellars, or encroach on the narrow space of other families, until, at higher rents, they have, in some mysterious way, found holes, like rabbits, where it would seem that every inch of the warren was already overstocked. Intolerable are the conditions of life, horrible the perils, moral and physical, dismal indeed the experiences of a population packed like that. Health there, is merely a name for modified disease, decency is fastidiousness, ordinary morality is a shining virtue, drunkenness is almost venial. All they care for is *a night's lodging!* Most of them, men, women, or children, live in the streets all day. You think it no wonder, if you have examined their pens, that the bar of the gin-palace is crowded by pallid, dirty-faced wretches gloomily drinking their gin or beer; and you look at some huge animal cruelly striking the thin creature who strives to guide him 'homewards,' or at half-conscious mothers soothing their shrivelled infants with the poison that has dried up both nourishment

and heart within their own breasts—or at boys of nine and ten with old, hard, fixed features and cunning eyes, taking their brandy and cigar. And, while you look and curse the agent of such degradation, you who have seen where these people herd and pen will say, 'If drink brings men to this, that also must bring them to drink.' God save us! If that be all their wages can procure them of joy or comfort, what is left to them but to seek 'respite and nepenthe' in suicide or intoxication?

Is the picture exaggerated?

But some one may say—as men have said to me before, who lived within a stone's throw of these scenes—'This picture which you give us is the painting of an excited, hysterical philanthropist. It may be correct of one or two places, but in the main it is exaggerated.' I reply, It is true of almost every district in London where the poor congregate. It is equally true of Manchester, of Liverpool, of Glasgow, of other great towns; it is true, not merely of thousands, but of hundreds of thousands. Dr. French, the medical officer of Liverpool, reported that

26,000 houses in Liverpool were occupied by families in single rooms. Lord Derby's calculation from this statement, that at least one-third of the population of Liverpool, 150,000 persons, were living in these conditions, cannot be exaggerated. In St. George's, Hanover Square, the richest and most aristocratic district in the world, 450 persons were found, a short time ago, living in 12 houses. In St. Giles and Holborn 11,000 families live in single rooms. And what are these rooms like? In one room visited, which was 12ft. by 13 and 7ft. 6in. high, lived 8 persons, paying a rent of four shillings a week. Is it possible to intensify the interest of these facts? Yes! you may even find some rooms occupied by relays of human animals. Persons engaged at or attending theatres at night, sublet their beds to market people, and when the market people turn out, the theatre people turn into the same beds. Here, in these awful depths, humanity asserts its brotherhood in misery, and the sacred community of beasts is proved by their being tied up together in one sheet.

XXIX.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

The agricultural labourers.

Let us turn our back on towns and manufactures, and, sick at heart with the awful problems these sights suggest, hasten to breathe the pure air of the country. There, amid clipped hedges and shady lanes, by the gloriously green meads and mantling fields of wheat, by grove-crowned hills stretching their velvet-slippered feet down to the tiny rivers that purl and curl along the vales below, where all seems like Eden, and the meanest dwellings are picturesque with thatch and creeping rose or running vine, there at all events, say you, shall we find healthy and happy homes! You reach village after village, and farm after farm, in some of the most populous southern counties, and converse with the old bent men who still ply the spade, or with the women who are toiling in the fields.

They will take you to the cottage, with its

little attic, where they and their seven, eight, or nine children have slept together for fifteen or twenty years. If you are a novelist of the modern school in search of new and horrible crimes, you may get some stories from the old women about their sons and daughters, which, if your soul does not shrink from seeing human nature dissected and exposed in such ghastly shape, will enable you to outvie the most sensational authors in their peculiar line. I dare not hint to you American ladies and gentlemen of those things which benevolent Samaritans are obliged to sound of the depths of sorrow and wickedness in those fair country districts. Earning ten or eleven shillings a week; on that expected to bring up their families; regularly falling back in winter on the poor-rates; always resorting to the parish dispensary and doctor in times of sickness; ignorant, famine-fed, with a distress which has no outlet and little reprieve, such is the lot in many a district of merry England of those who till the soil.

XXX.

STORY OF A FARM LABOURER AT LUDLOW.

Story of a farm labourer at Ludlow.

I heard a man at Ludlow, before a crowded meeting of employés and labourers who had known him from his youth, tell the simple story of his experiences in life.

'I was the son of a farm labourer. He earnt 8*s.* a week. I began as a boy to scare the crows, and went on till I could plough and drive a team, and reap and do amost anything. When I married, wages were nine shillin a week. We had five children, and then my wife fell ill. She were ill for two year off and on, lying in her bed, and slowly dying the whole time. The doctor said she wanted better food. We had nothing more to eat but bread, and a drop o' cabbage soup, and a bit o' bacon now and then. The doctor said the best thing for her was milk. I went to missis, (theer warn't no milk to be bought in the neighbourhood), and told her what the doctor said, and asked her fur to

sell me a little milk every day for my wife. She said, "Do 'ee spoase I can sell 'ee any milk when I want it to fatten the pigs?" My wife didn't have no milk, and she died. I asked maister to increase my wages. He says, "No, Robert, I can't do that without the rest do it. If I was to rise wages 'thout they agreed, I daresent show my face to market. I can't afoord to pay no more wages."'

When you consider that these are not isolated and anomalous facts, but that they suggest the realities of hundreds of thousands of lives, you will begin dimly to apprehend the extent and gravity of the problems which the English reformer has to face.

XXXI.

THE POOR LAWS AND PAUPERISM.

The Poor-laws and pauperism.

But the picture is not yet complete. Before I outline its redeeming features—and thank God, there is sunshine too!—there are yet shadows to be added. When Dante was

investigating the infernal regions he was always coming on some place or incident worse than the last. So I have yet to introduce you, and I do it with a practical purpose as you will see, to that fearful closet of our great English house—THE POOR-LAW SYSTEM.

Pauperism in England—that is, as a system of systematised poverty—is the growth of three hundred years. Taking its spring from the days of Henry VIII., it was established by an Act passed in the forty-third year of Queen Elizabeth. The principle of that Act is communistic. It is that everyone in England who cannot find or undertake employment is entitled to relief from the state: 'perhaps,' says Professor Fawcett, 'the most perilous responsibility ever assumed by a nation.' At first this relief was restricted, being given only to the impotent poor, and in the workhouse; the able-bodied poor were compelled to work for it.

In about a hundred and fifty years, whether it were owing to an increase of population in excess of the field of employ-

ment, or from whatever circumstance, the number of claimants increased, unions of parishes were formed, and that practice of assisting able-bodied persons either wholly or in part without obliging them to enter a workhouse, now called 'outdoor relief,' was by degrees introduced. Men received grants of money in aid of wages. Women received assistance in their homes. The greater the number of children a man had the more he obtained from the guardians of the poor. So burdensome were the incidents of this system that *Laws of Settlement* were enacted to impose the responsibility of keeping these people on the parishes in which they were born or wherein they had lived for a certain length of time. The rates became enormous. The labouring classes, too well provided for, and sure of a maintenance, were thoroughly demoralised. In one case three generations of the same family were found to be receiving relief and drawing from the rates 100*l.* a year. In one parish in Berkshire, the whole land was offered to the assembled paupers, but they refused it, preferring the ease of recipience to the troubles of ownership.

See Fawcett on 'Pauperism, etc.'

Modification of the Poor-Law.

The intolerable is an active, if displeasing promoter of improvement. A new poor-law was one of the earliest products of the Reform Parliament; restraints were placed on the profligate system of outdoor relief, and matters improved under the influence of increasing prosperity; but notwithstanding the marvellous development of English manufactures and commerce, spite of free corn and free-trade, spite of reform legislation, better social conditions, zealous religion, active philanthropy, and lavish charities—spite of colonial emigration and an enormous exodus to the United States, there still lies upon the breast of England that ceaseless incubus of indolence and imbecility. In London one in every seven of the population receives relief in some shape or other from the poor-law authorities during the year.

In 1860 the population was 2,770,000, with 86,000 paupers.

In 1863 the population was 2,904,000, with 94,000 paupers.

In 1869 the population was 3,082,000, with 126,000 paupers.

Costing 1,175,000*l.* stg., or $5,875,000 per annum.

In 1870 the population was 3,215,000, with 141,000 paupers.

Costing 1,466,000*l.* stg., or $7,330,000 per annum.

In England one in every twenty is a pauper. What would you think in New York if every seventh man you met in the street were living on rates taken from your pocket? Or if in journeying over the union you knew every twentieth person to be in effect a beggar?

Through the whole country the paupers, exclusive of vagrants and casual poor, had increased in 1870 to 1,079,391. Happily, for the last two years the numbers have been materially less, but they are still at a standard you would deem to be fearful. In 1872 there were 977,664, of whom 153,000 were able-bodied adults.

In some of the United States, where a system of poor relief analogous to that of England has been adopted, there are already symptoms of similar results. In various large

cities during this crisis the working men have advanced the dangerous demand for state works or state support. I warn you to be careful! Mr. Fawcett points out that in Philadelphia, out of 120,000 poor persons receiving assistance, 110,000 received outdoor relief. Such a statement is incredible—its verity is portentous for your future. Once encourage this vicious system—once admit in a country where no able-bodied man need starve, that he may rely for assistance on state or private charity without the condition of entering a workhouse or engaging in labour for it, and a process of demoralisation will have begun, the end whereof none of you can forecast. You will have adopted a cub that may grow up to swallow its master.

The results of this vicious system are illustrated in a startling way by Professor Fawcett. In England, where outdoor relief is given, the proportion of outdoor to indoor paupers is eight to one. In Ireland, land of misery and turmoil, with restrictions on outdoor relief, the proportion is reversed, viz. five indoor to one outdoor, and the whole

number of Irish paupers in a country of five and a half millions of people is one-half that of London alone. In the Highlands of Scotland, where the system of outdoor relief has been adopted, there is twelve times as much pauperism as in Ulster and Connaught. In England one in every twenty is a pauper; in Scotland, one in every twenty-three; in Ireland only one in every seventy-four.

Principles of charitable relief.

These facts are more eloquent than any warning I could utter. The only principles on which charity, public or private, can be safely administered, are, that no man should be helped who can help himself, and that charity, public and private, should be organised and concurrently administered. It is very hard to be obliged to say that private charity is often blind, stupid, profligate, and wanton in its management, but it is a truth we have learned in England. Remember that every act of relief to an able-bodied man or woman to whom any means of independent subsistence is both a duty and possibility, is a demoralisation of the recipient and an injury to society.

But I am not giving you a social-science lecture. I had only to point out to you what a monster we entertain in English society. There are in the West Indies minute parasites that eat their way into the skin, and by and by lay their bag of eggs and encroach more upon the flesh until they produce a painful ulcer a thousand times larger than themselves, and which may even become fatal. Such a parasite is indolent and voluntary poverty, encouraged or unregarded—a pest you should soon and vigorously eradicate.

XXXII.

THE FOUR PRINCIPAL PERILS OF ENGLISH SOCIETY.

The four principal perils of English society.

I think you will now be able to understand me when I state that the principal perils of English society are four in number. They arise;

1. From the efforts made by the upper and wealthy classes to retard the advancing power and resist the just claims of the working man.

2. From that mass of pauperism which I have described, which lives on the rates and seems to have such a horrible mystery of propagation.

3. From the terrible, unparalleled power of degradation which, with increasing tyranny, is wielded by strong drink. And,

4. From the deficiency of incitements, moral and material, to thrift and ambition among the working classes.

XXXIII.

FIRST DANGER: THE RELATION OF THE WORKING MAN TO POLITICS AND CAPITAL.

First danger—the relation of the working-man to politics and capital.

The first danger, you will observe, is both political and social. Of this I might say enough to occupy a whole lecture. It has many branches. There is, for instance, the agricultural labourer question. The resurrection of hinds—living half on the rates and half on a pittance the bare mention of which stirs your compassion, the slaves without being the property of their masters, ought

now to be a familiar story to you. I have never seen anything that has so moved me as I have been moved when I have stood by and watched these hopeless sons of toil, long blinded to their rights and possibilities of improvement, opening their eyes to the blessed dawn of a better day under the stirring eloquence of Joseph Arch. When they began to gather from him the encouraging assurance that there were privileges of manhood which they might assert, and opportunities to win a better future for their children, it was infinitely pitiful, yet, O how gladdening!—to hear them blurting out their awakening ideas and half-timid yet invincible resolves.

Effects of the agricultural labourers' resurrection.

This movement must lead to important changes in English agriculture. It will alter the system of tenancy—it may cause the conversion of a great deal of arable land into pasturage; it will quicken emigration. Above all, it is a Radical movement when the agricultural labourer gets the franchise, and must give impetus to the political and social changes impending in Great Britain.

XXXIV.

THE TRADES UNIONS.

The Trades Unions.

Hand-in-glove with the Agricultural Unions are the great Trades Unions in the towns, numbering hundreds of thousands of members, with incomes of many thousands of pounds. In their contest with capital these Unions are very powerful—in their political combination they have been, as yet, weak and unsuccessful. They have wanted clear political aims—sound political judgment—trust in their leaders—and too often leaders whom they could trust. Hence they have readily exposed themselves to the gibes of the satirical journals of the privileged classes, or to the wanton and savage needle-thrusts of social cynics like Mr. W. R. Greg. But they are gradually emerging from the valley of shadows, they can already discern the antiquated giants of privilege, trembling and biting their nails with futile anger; and they will go on, prepared by experience and enlightened by education, to victorious contests and a better life.

XXXV.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN CAPITAL AND LABOUR.

The battle between capital and labour.

Capitalist and Unionist are cutting each other's throats in England, as they are the world over. The former has not yet learned that the conditions of contract are changed for ever, and that slavery at a low price can no longer be had for love or money. The Unionist, pressing for his rights, and too often ignorant of the real limits of those rights, asks too much or grasps it too eagerly, and threatens to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Every allowance must be made for men who after centuries of injustice and of ignorance are made suddenly alive to their opportunities, but I, who sympathise with them and work with them, warn them not to go too fast and too far. So surely as they do, the reaction will come, with fatal retribution. Those who, from other classes, take part with them in this great struggle, spite of

their occasional wrong-doing, their blindness, and their suspicions, are truer conservatives than the men who with sharp, cruel, and bitter words make light of their complaints, laugh at their claims, abuse their ignorance, and attempt to vindicate the arrogant and untenable claims of privilege and money.

On both sides we need firmness and moderation. The old conditions, the old relations of capital and labour, are to be changed, are now changing. Some better methods of apportioning their respective profits must inevitably be devised.

Co-operation and Industria partnerships.

Large establishments are now successfully conducted in England on the principle of co-operation or of Industrial Partnerships. I understand that the great steel works in course of erection at Glasgow, under the supervision of Mr. Michael Scott, who has given to this subject considerable attention, and has also tested it in practice, are to be managed on the Industrial Partnership principle.

The crisis.

Every capitalist at this crisis—nay, I would say every friend of humanity,—should

give himself to study the relations of capital and labour, and bend all his intellect, energy, and influence to smooth the change from the old to the new *régime*. However unpalatable the statement, *that change is inevitable*. It is attended with lamentable incidents. I have to own as to English workmen, as you will own as to those of America, how much of tyranny, of ingratitude, of absolute wrong-doing, of degraded use of improved circumstances, has come under my own notice. But then conceive what a class must be growing up in such conditions as I have described to you. The effects are truly deplorable. In one case I heard of a large ironmaster who had treated his men with unwonted liberality, and yet again and again found himself forced in the middle of some critical contract to raise their wages. Last year, as he was leaving for the continent, and giving directions to his manager, he said: 'At the end of the year you will not give the usual Christmas treat. Call the men together and discharge the whole of them. I'll have nothing more to do with workingmen again.'

A printer in London, who employs a large number of men, said to me: 'My men came last week and asked me if we were going to have the annual summer picnic I have been in the habit of giving them, and I turned them out of the office. They have been striking every six weeks, and they may pay for their own treats. They'll get no treats out of me.'

This gentleman is a man not only of benevolence but of benevolent energy, but you see his sympathies are warped by his sense of injury. To me these are gravely significant facts. They could be indefinitely multiplied. They indicate a state of things which must be either appeased or give place to open war. Capitalists, who in existing circumstances insist on the old *régime*, or threaten to withdraw their capital from manufactures—a silly and impracticable proceeding, as every economist knows—are assuming a terrible responsibility. They will then be left to face the question, 'What are these men to do without work?' And when lately in Wales a clique of capitalists were with-

standing 40,000 miners and ironworkers, the increased police, the prepared soldiery, and the fear of all England, showed what that may involve.[1]

[1] These passages, written some months before the event, acquire increased significance from the recent movement of capitalists to establish a federation of capital. That the English upper and wealthy classes were living in a fool's paradise, that they walked the upper ground unconscious of the perilous forces that were gathering beneath them, I have long maintained, but I could scarcely have conceived that they were so infatuated as these men seem to be. The gods must be in conspiracy against them. Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Odger could not have devised or desired a move better calculated to give a momentum to their projects. The antagonism of capital and labour was already defined with sufficient sharpness, and the difficulties of approximation were already too glaring. The capitalists were already combined by facts, and interests, and superiority of position, of ability, of political power, of privileges. It was all this, involving absolute supremacy, which necessitated on the part of the workmen organised combination for the purpose of asserting their simple rights and securing the position to treat on equal terms. But what shall we think of an association deliberately framed with the hostile object of fighting the unions with their own weapons?

I hope the workmen of Great Britain will observe the full significance of this proceeding. It was not enough to have had nearly the whole political power, to have for long years legislated chiefly for their own benefit, to have legislated directly against trades' combinations, to have governed by a House of Commons in which there is not a single working man. The capitalists now proclaim a crusade against labour; they throw down the gage of WAR where everything, the happiness and prosperity of Great Britain, the conservation of her institutions, nay, of society itself, was calling out in the

This portentous question is beginning to shake the very pillars of society in almost every part of the civilised world. The Coolie, the Negro, the immigrants into western lands,

most solemn tones for COMPROMISE AND PEACE! Hitherto the working-classes have been disorganised and fitful in their political and social action. Can there be any doubt that fronting this new power they will close together and be as one man?

There is one word, however, which in the interests of peace I must utter. At the end of *Little Hodge* I endeavoured to illustrate a theory of pacification which has for some time appeared to me to be the most hopeful one. It was that a more complete organisation of the opposing forces might be the necessary precedent of their federation. In matters of this kind, where hostilities have to be compromised, there can be nothing better than two responsible bodies in a position to treat with each other. While therefore it is clear that the working-men must now prepare to meet in fair combat the body which so directly challenges them, it would be criminal to overlook the fact that this body may probably before long become a means of compromising the most threatening issues. The worst feature of the new association is its expressed aim to promote the 'freedom of labour,' that is, as the *Spectator* properly says, to discourage combination. The other objects of the association are in themselves legitimate and harmless. If they can get working-men to read their arguments, and adopt them and endorse them at the polls, well and good. But I point out to them, as I point out to the workmen, that if they will throw aside the foolish and insane attack upon combination, it is possible that the more thorough the organisation on both sides the more satisfactory may be the settlement. Neither side can hope to suppress the unions of the other, but they can expect to meet them on equal terms, and to come to arrangements of universal application and benefit.

the English artisan and peasant, the French and German workman, all alike are conspiring together to demand for labour a larger reward, a better coparcenary with capital.

What is the solution?

Is there to be no end to this unholy war? Can humanity or Christianity invent no means of reconciling the irreconcilable, or is the frightful aphorism of Hobbes to be verified and the natural state of man be perpetuated and aggravated in a condition of civilisation? In God's name let every man, be he on one side or the other, lend a hand to stay the fratricidal strife! Failing this, to neither side is there anything but ruin or dismay. I say to the capitalist solemnly and urgently: 'Recognise the inevitable as you would when you saw the hurricane sweeping along over the main; take in sail, bout ship if need be, and sail before the wind. Make friends with forces that may be either friendly or hostile, as you will.'

I say to the labourer: 'Stay your hand. You have the numbers, and your victory is sure. Beware that it be not a contest over a stripped and barren land. Use your organi-

sations not as a means of oppression but justice. You might succeed too well—in losing all.'

XXXVI.

DRINK AND PAUPERISM.

Drink and pauperism.

As to drink, with an increasing consumption every quarter swelling the revenue, the increase chiefly extracted from the better wages of the labouring class, I must leave you to imagine how terrible a subject that is. Drink is now an organised political power, returning brewers and distillers to Parliament, aiding Anglican and Papal divinity, degrading the constituencies, nay, demoralising the very government, which is obliged to make terms with the disastrous tyrant. Against this, and against the third peril, that of pauperism, temperance and social reformers are striving with noble energy, and not without hope.

XXXVII.

THE FOURTH DANGER: DEFICIENCY OF INCITEMENTS TO THRIFT.

The fourth danger—deficiency of incitements to thrift.

The fourth danger, namely, that of the absence of incitements, moral and material, to thrift among the working classes, is more complicated and raises deeper issues.

The effect of that poor-law which I have described, has been to sap the independent spirit of the labourers. In England it is but little a man can save, and that little diminishes his prospects of help from the guardians of the poor. The poor-law reverses the maxim of Christ, 'To him that hath shall be given.' It is the careless, thriftless man or woman who, in old age, can retire to the poor-house or obtain the benefits of outdoor relief. Do you wonder that men are improvident under such a system? Do you wonder that such a system has not confuted itself to the densest English intellect after two hundred years and more of trial?

But 'besides the poor-law,' I am quoting Professor Fawcett, 'another circumstance which discourages prudential habits among the working classes is the feeling that no amount of saving which it is possible for them to make will give them any reasonable prospect of rising in life.' There is little hope, or scope either, in business. The amount a working man can save is too small to enable any number to compete with. larger capitalists and more accustomed tradesmen. Nor will their savings generally enable them to buy land. A monopoly in the hands of the wealthy, subject to the disabilities created by primogeniture, which locks up large tracts of it in one family from generation to generation; held in masses by great corporations; settled in the hands of trustees; land, the most valuable heritage of society, is in England and Scotland the property of a few. Vast districts are destitute, and have been deliberately emptied of population to make room for sheep, grouse, or red-deer. Class laws, protecting game for the amusement of aristocrats and rich commoners, give the

Professor Fawcett. Discouragement to saving.

The land monopoly.

land not only the nature of a luxury but also a factitious value for purposes foreign to the public good. The same laws operate to the discouragement of agriculture. The expenses of land transfer under a complicated land system are so great that a man who purchased a freehold property under 500*l.* in value would probably pay from 60*l.* to 100*l.* in law expenses. Thus the best field of ambition for a working man, the hope of acquiring a piece of land to till and dwell on, is denied to the English million.

Our colonies and our statesmen.

Is there any other outlet for the seething population? Yes. There are our colonies and the United States, rich, free, crying out for the strong arms that at home dig and delve with hopeless energy for a daily skinful of meat and drink, to come and win an estate for themselves and their children. This opening we have for years urged the Government to facilitate. But the economist, bound to his fatal laws of supply and demand, has refused to listen; the statesman, at once aristocrat's and capitalist's friend, has declined to promote a reduction in the num-

ber of British labourers, whatever the consequences; both economist and statesman, indifferent to anything but present material prosperity, have stigmatised the colonies as a useless burden and emigration as a blunder; and the result is that they who might have made a whole empire strong and prosperous, who might have relieved the perilous plethora at home, facilitated the solution of some of our gravest problems, and developed in our possessions a wealth that would have re-established English supremacy in the world, are left to meet those fearful conditions which I have depicted, while they have imperilled the very integrity of an empire whose splendour and extent were eulogised by Daniel Webster in words that can never die.

Threatened decay of the imperial sentiment.

In speaking to you of the England of to-day, there is no confession I have to make more mortifying than that of the threatened decay of the imperial sentiment—that invariable preliminary of national degradation. I say threatened, but happily, I trust, averted. It is in high quarters that we have seen these symptoms of degradation; but only among a

select circle of economists or politicians. It is said that one of our greatest statesmen, not long since conversing with a gentleman, who in speaking of the British Empire argued that were it denuded of its colonies it would dwindle to the position of Holland, replied—

'And what of that? Is not a Hollander as happy as an Englishman?'

There is no more significant symptom of national decadence than the dying out of the imperial sentiment. It is perilous enough when a people coddled in luxury and surfeited with riches begin to be indifferent to the national safety, but it is fatal when they count with parsimonious thrift the cost of maintaining their integrity, and would purchase ease and peace with the loss of some of the national soil. Had a temper so ignoble begun to canker this great commonwealth, and had the disease entered so deep that not even the sharp knife of war could excise it, who would not have said, as he looked upon the inglorious though mighty fragments of a nation so soon disjointed,

that its people had been miscreants, undeserving of their freedom and unworthy of their greatness?

In England, against this spirit of cold, unnatural economy, there have fortunately been men found to protest. When, some time ago, ministers gave vent to significant expressions of indifference to the loyalty of the colonies, withdrew British soldiers from Canada and New Zealand, when Mr. Gladstone suggested that the most a British statesman could do was to prepare the way for colonial independence, there was an outburst of feeling in England which showed that the British lion was not yet dead. He would be a reckless minister who would now stand up in the House of Commons to propose the separation of the colonies from Great Britain; and that would be a daring nation, which, relying on the British love of peace, should venture to violate one foot of our vast territories, or to attempt to seduce any colony from its allegiance.

XXXVIII.

THE INHERENT GREATNESS AND STRENGTH OF ENGLAND INDICATED BY THE STEADINESS OF HER PROGRESS IN REFORM.

The inherent greatness and strength of England indicated by the steadiness of her progress in Reform.

Were I speaking of any other country you might well say that I had been depicting a condition of things which was hopeless. But we are speaking of England—a land accustomed to disconcert probabilities and prophecies. For our wonderful nation carries these evils stoutly, and with every promise of redress. What marvels have not our reformers already achieved without bloodshed or rebellion!

No period of history is more fruitful and extraordinary than that of Great Britain since the beginning of this century. Recall the names of our reformers—of Wilberforce, of Brougham, of Peel, of Russell, of Cobden and Bright, of Gladstone, what a history of judicious and ever-progressive statesmanship do they suggest!

Review of Reforms.

Slavery was abolished at a cost of 20,000,000*l.* sterling. Before the year 1828 no dissenter could hold a corporate office without taking the communion in the Church of England; and in that year Lord John Russell—a man greater and more fortunate in his home than his foreign policy—had the Test and Corporation Acts repealed. That was the beginning of a struggle for the liberation of religion in England which is not yet ended. Next the reformers proceeded to remove the political and civil disabilities which at that time debarred Roman Catholics from enjoying the full rights of citizenship. The first Reform Bill, enlarging the constituencies and abolishing the worst of those pocket-boroughs which gave to their aristocratic owners the privilege of returning members to Parliament, came next.

The Reform of the Constituencies was followed by the Reform of Municipal Corporations and of the Poor Law, and by that measure which with its collateral developments of Free Trade has made England the wealthiest of nations, I mean the Repeal of

the Corn Laws. Next followed to perdition the old navigation laws. Later on we have had another Reform Bill presented to us by Mr. Disraeli, giving household suffrage in the towns, though not yet in the counties. We have disestablished the Irish Church; we have reformed the Irish land laws; we have abolished the compulsory payment of rates to the Established Church by Dissenters; we have admitted Jews to Parliament; we have framed, though not yet perfected, a great national system of education; we have begun to reform the laws relating to Public Health; we have reorganised that stronghold of privilege the Army, and have improved our system of Judicature; we now protect voters in municipal and parliamentary elections by the Ballot. Such a list of reforms accomplished in the lifetime of one man, like Earl Russell, who has taken more or less part in all these measures, while it recalls to you the intolerable conditions of English society and politics at the beginning of this century, also indicates the inherent greatness and vitality of a nation which, en-

gaged in battling with evils so prodigious, has nevertheless gone on developing in population, and wealth, and commerce and manufactures, in religion and philanthropy, at a rate, taking all these things together, hardly surpassed by any other nation. Striking indeed would be the history, had I time to review it, of the social changes wrought in England, of its material development, of the improved condition of its artisans, of the magnificence of its charities. Still I have shown you how much there remains for the reformer to do; what dangers evil laws, bad statesmanship, centuries of wrong, class privilege, wicked wars, and vices permitted to grow into the body politic, have left us. I pray you be careful, as men who hold in your hands the destinies of the future, that you leave not to your posterity the dreadful legacy of such problems as these. There are ever sprouting in the body politic the beginnings of parasitical growths that may, like tropical vines, embrace and kill the tree on which they climb.

XXXIX.

REFORM IN ENGLAND IS SLOW AND STEADY.

Reform in England is slow and steady.

Fortunately for England, her people are slow and steady in their methods of reform. In other nations the evils long endured among us would have been swept away by torrents of blood. With us they have disappeared in more dignified and benignant courses. The deeply imprinted love of order, of constitution, of law, is the real safety of England amidst dangers that blanch the cheek of a thinking man. Reforms with us win their successes not only over the wills but over the wits of the people. And the truest, healthiest reforms must ever work thus. I love ever to hear the voice of reform coming not in the mighty rushing wind but in the still small voice that penetrates to and moves the minds and the hearts of the people. It comes best not as the hurricane, or the deluge, or the earthquake, but as the majestic swelling of the mighty tide, rising

with slow but omnipotent force, kissing its way from pebble to pebble, moving so gently that the frailest shallop floats unharmed upon its smiling bosom; and by and by it reaches some ancient rock of privilege, some hardened relic of vested wrong, and circling around it with heightening waters at length overtops and hides it from view; and now and then it reaches some bark of reform, stranded or never launched, and with gradual but resistless power raises it inch by inch and foot by foot, until at length, as it floats free upon the smiling surface, the mariners within can hoist their sails and bear away, freighted with blessings for all mankind.

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